

What They Do

Animal Handlers provide the daily care of laboratory and farm animals used in biotechnology research and testing. They may work with exotic animals such as primates and snakes; farm animals such as sheep, cattle, and pigs; domestic animals such as cats, birds, and dogs; or laboratory perennials, such as rats, mice, and frogs. They ensure animal care complies with government regulations for humane treatment of laboratory animals.

Animal Handlers are responsible for the hygiene of animals and their environment. They clean and sanitize cages, pens, and equipment. They change bedding material and wash food containers. They order, load, unload, and store feed and supplies. They mix food, liquid formulas, medications, or food supplements according to directions, prescriptions, and knowledge of animal species. They exercise, water, and feed animals according to a schedule and instructions.

They examine the animals for signs of illness and administer laboratory tests to experimental animals. They record food intake, diet, weight, size, and physical condition. They may administer medicinal doses, inoculations, or topical treatments. They groom and bathe animals and maintain the proper temperature and humidity of their quarters. Animal Handlers working in agricultural biotechnology may assist with artificial insemination, births, or milking.

Animal Handlers must observe health and safety procedures when working with research animals to avoid injury or disease. Animal Handlers may advance to Animal Technician with further training and experience.

*Animal Handlers in the biotech industry share characteristics of Nonfarm Animal Caretakers. Detailed descriptions of these occupations may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.*

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities include:

- ▶ Biology – Knowledge of plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.
- ▶ Reading Comprehension – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- ▶ Speaking – Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- ▶ Oral Expression – The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
- ▶ Problem Sensitivity – The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.

Training/Requirements

- ▶ High school diploma or equivalent with a scientific background.
- ▶ Some employers prefer to hire employees that possess the Assistant Laboratory Animal Technician (ALAT) or similar certificate. (See **Additional Sources of Information.**)
- ▶ Possess up to two years of laboratory experience.

Animal Handlers

What's the California Job Outlook?

While the Bureau of Labor Statistics does not collect data on Animal Handlers, the occupation listed below is found in the biotechnology industry and has similar duties to Animal Handlers. The California outlook and wage figures are drawn from all industries and represent occupations comparable to Animal Handlers.

| Standard Occupational Classification | Estimated Number of Workers 2002 | Estimated Number of Workers 2012 | Average Annual Openings | 2005 Wage Range (per hour) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Nonfarm Animal Caretakers | | | | |
| 39-2021 | 8,400 | 10,100 | 380 | \$7.92 to \$12.28 |

These figures do not include self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus openings due to separations.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Additional Sources of Information

American Association for Laboratory Animal Science
(901) 754-8620
www.aalas.org

Northern California Branch of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science
www.ncbaalas.org

Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care
(301) 231-5353
www.aaalac.org

Occupational Information Network (O*NET)
<http://online.onetcenter.org>